NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Third Report of Investigation

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY.

THIRD

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION (ABRIDGED)

FOR

The National Institute for the Blind,
224-6-8, Great Portland Street,
London, W. 1.

Since the last report to the Placement Sub-Committee in March, 1928, a further series of investigations have been carried out, the most important points being outlined below.

The Report has been divided into three sections:-

(1) Investigations into problems of Workshop environment.
(11) Vocational problems of the more highly educated blind.
(111) Suggestions for future work.

I. INVESTIGATIONS INTO PROBLEMS OF WORKSHOP ENVIRONMENT.

(1) Scope of investigation.

In order to compare the earning capacity of the totally and partially blind workers and investigate the influence of vision, wage records of 173 men and 43 women were studied, tests of manual dexterity were applied to 181 men and 96 women. The examinees were grouped according to trades to allow for variations of trade conditions and training.

(2) Results.

(a) Study of wages.

The examinees were divided into three age groups (20 - 29)(30 - 39)(40 and over) and two vision groups, totally and partially blind. The data obtained leads one to believe that between the ages 30 to 40 there is in both vision groups a drop in earnings and that wage differences between totally and partially blind is approximately 10%.

(b) Quality of work.

There is no evidence that in general some compensatory power of "Concentration" enables the totally blind to excel or even always to equal the work of the partially blind.

(c) Influence of age.

Dexterity tests, necessitating collecting material for assembly, definitely showed that speed is reduced with increase of age. Where, however the material worked on did not require transfer from place to place, age made little difference.

(d) Influence of vision.

See item (c).

(e) Influence of trade.

The results of the dexterity tests applied both to men and women showed that for the totally and partially blind the higher skilled their trade, the better their success in these tests. The male boot-repairers and the women weavers gained the first place when the workers are ranked by trades

(f) Comparison with the seeing

The results of dexterity tests given to blind and sighted people proved that in nearly all cases there were large differences in effective skill, and that the effect of blindfolding the sighted was not altogether to equalise their efficiencies.

(3) Conclusions.

(a) The potential efficiency for occupations of a manual kind of a partially blind person, is not generally reduced as much as that of a totally blind person.

(b) The occupations at present carried out in the workshops for the blind, being chosen because of their suitability for the totally as well as partially blind, do not permit of much difference between the earning capacities of the two groups. Hence it may be concluded bearing in mind the results of the dexterity tests, that if the totally blind were placed in occupations suitable for the partially blind, and ipso facto less suitable to themselves, their efficiency would be lower.

(4) Recommendations.

(a) To encourage the partially blind and those totally blind but with factory experience to consider employment under factory conditions and to reserve the present occupations mainly for the totally blind.

(b) To use the "Team" method combining blind and seeing workers to its fullest extent both in blind and sighted factories. New trades could then be introduced into existing Institutions.

(c) To set up an experimental workshop and training school to enable processes and methods of organisation to be tried out.

II. VOCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE MORE HIGHLY EDUCATED BLIND.

(1) Enquiries made.

Worcester, Chorley Wood and the Royal Normal College have been visited, only at the latter was vocational training in force.
The number of pupils to be launched out on a career was found to be from 18 to 20 per annum (piano-tuners excluded).
Lists of occupations and careers for which secondary schools and University education are highly desirable were compiled and the practicability of employing blind persons in them considered. The results left a list almost identical with the occupations already followed.

(2) Recommendations.

(a) To explore co-operative activities of a business type, i.e. management of small shops such as newsagents, tobacconists, tea-rooms, etc.

(b) To increase the openings in occupations already attempted.

(c) To train boys as well as girls in shorthand-typing and business methods .

(d) To consider the advisability of adopting vocational training in all colleges bearing in mind that the attainments of a blind boy or girl of 21 will normally only equal that of a sighted child of 17.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK.

The problems for future investigations which arise out of this report are:-

(1) On the industrial side.

(a) The selection of suitable processes in which to train blind persons.

(b) The selection of suitable persons for training.

(c) The methods of training.

(d) The methods of organising blind labour in workshops and factories.

(e) The co-operation of employers in securing employment.

(2) On the professional side.

(a) The study of the processes of education and the limitations of blindness (in preventing studies such as science and mechanics).

(b) The determination of the best vocational training and the methods of giving it.

(c) The finding of opportunities for employment.

(3) General.

The whole problem of vocational training and education as effected by blindness.

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Notes on the Institute's investigations for the National Institute for the Blind.

These enquiries can be conveniently divided into two main sections

1. The study of the different occupations which the various types of blind persons might successfully take up.
2. Suggestions for the improvement of existing workshops in layout and methods.

In connection with the studies of occupations an experiment was conducted in a workshop for the blind in order to obtain data with regard to

1. The time taken by blind girls to learn a simple repetition operation, such as is required in the assembling of a piece of electrical equipment.
2. The relation between success and degree of vision.
3. The variations in output with practice, fatigue, loss of interest, etc.

Tests designed to measure the degree of vision, the Intelligence and the Manual Dexterity of the workers concerned were also used.

Visits were paid to a considerable number of factories and processes were examined from the point of view of their suitability for blind workers. Preliminary studies of various questions connected with the desirability of the different forms of employment (the placing out of workers, work in connection with existing institutions, and subcontracting) were made and suggestions for further investigation put forward. Attention was also paid to the problems of vocational guidance and training involved.

More Recent Work.

In connection with the problems of the more highly educated blind, investigations into the possibilities of the employment of blind persons in English Insurance were carried out.

The attached report contains a summary of the Institute's most recent report on this work.

At the present time investigations are being made into the improvement of existing workshops in layout and methods.